

# Pygmy Short-horned Lizards and the Department of Defense



The Pygmy Short-horned Lizard (*Phrynosoma douglasii*) is a medium-sized lizard with a blunt snout, round flattened body, short legs and a short triangular-shaped tail. They are affectionately known as “horny toads.”

**Description:** Maximum size is around 2.5 inches (65 mm) snout-vent length; females tend to be significantly larger than males. The sides and back of the body are fringed with small spines, while spines or “horns” project from the back of the head. The dorsal color may be white, gray, beige, tan, brown, black, yellow, or orange with paired dark blotches edged with white or pale orange. The tail may also have dark dorsal bands.

**Range:** Primarily inhabits the Columbia Plateau, Modoc Plateau, and East Cascades Ecoregions of eastern and central Washington and Oregon, southern Idaho, northern Nevada, and northeastern California. Found at elevations of 1000 to 7218 feet (300-2200 meters).



Source: IUCN

**Habitat:** This species requires friable sandy soils intermixed with rocky outcrops. It is found in a range of vegetation types from shrub-steppe to bunch grass plains, pinyon juniper woodland and open pine forests.

**Behavior:** This species eats primarily ants and other insects. They use camouflage and stealth to avoid predation, and can exhibit bursts of speed for short distances. They can also conceal themselves underground. This species gives live-bearing birth to 3-15 young from July to September.

**Conservation Status:** There is currently no State or Federal status for this species. It is listed as G5-Secure by NatureServe and Least Concern by IUCN.

**Threats:** The greatest threat is habitat loss, especially conversion of native habitat to agricultural. Additionally, insecticide applications reduce the ant and other insect prey available to the lizards. The species is also subject to collection for the pet trade.

## Occurrence on Military Lands

Confirmed	Potential
Approximately five military installations in Idaho and Oregon.	Up to 10 military installations across its range and several Army Corps of Engineers Habitat Management Units in the Walla Walla District.

